



**Sophie
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**Speech and
Language Therapist**

Introduce yourself. Where do you work? What is your job role?

Hello, my name is Sophie, and I am a Band 5 Speech and Language Therapist currently working in Special Schools within the Belfast Trust.

What does your job entail?

In my role, I work directly with children both in the classroom and in side rooms. This involves liaising with parents and teachers, conducting formal and informal assessments, and observing children in a classroom setting. Based on these assessments and observations, I create individualized care plans to meet each child's unique needs. This may involve providing advice to teachers and parents, sending resources into the classroom, facilitating group work, or working directly with the child to help improve their functional communication. I also keep accurate records of all interactions with teachers, parents, and children, collaborate with colleagues and other allied health professionals and social workers, and complete ongoing training to further develop my skills.

How did you get into this line of work?

From a young age, I always knew that I wanted to work with children or animals and have a positive impact on people's lives. In high school, I took a career quiz which suggested Speech and Language Therapy as a potential career path for me. After researching the profession, I was convinced that this was the right job for me. During my lower sixth form, I had two placements in very different settings: one in a high school with a hearing unit and one with a private speech therapist. Seeing the work that speech therapists did in these two settings made me love the job even more. Throughout my degree program, I enjoyed most of the placements I went on, with the exception of one adult placement that I didn't enjoy simply because I didn't want to work with adults.

Outline your career to date

I have been a speech and language therapist for 2 ½ years. As a speech therapist, I have worked in community settings, such as health centres where children are booked in for speech therapy sessions, as well as in learning support units attached to mainstream schools and several special schools. All of these settings have been very different, and I have worked in both the Northern Trust and the Belfast Trust. In my first post, I was in a different place every day, and in my second and third posts, I have been in two different places throughout the week. Before becoming a speech therapist, I worked as a nursery assistant, classroom assistant, summer scheme leader, and in the ASD service.

Tell us about your qualifications and training

I studied at Manchester Metropolitan University and completed a joint degree in Psychology and Speech Pathology. Being away from home was challenging, but it was worth it as the lecturers at Manchester Metropolitan were all kind and supportive. I have lasting friendships with my friends from university, who are all speech therapists working in England.

What qualities are required for your job – personal and professional?

Empathy, creativity, good communication skills, honesty, willingness to learn and develop, a commitment to engage in continuous self-learning to develop skills, good teamwork skills, lots of patience, hard work, and good problem-solving skills are all important qualities for a Speech and Language Therapist. Not every case is straightforward, so being able to think on your feet and adapt is crucial. If working with children, a willingness to be silly and have fun is also important.

What is the best advice you have ever received?

Never be afraid to ask questions, you aren't expected to know everything and asking questions and researching is the only way you are going to learn more

Tell us an interesting fact about yourself

When I was 20, I took part in the Tall Ships Races and sailed from Belfast to Norway on a German Tall Ship. Although I can speak a little German, I still didn't understand any of the instructions the captain shouted at us. It was a great experience nonetheless.

What do you like to do in your spare time?

I enjoy reading, playing video games, going on walks in forests or mountains, swimming, and crocheting.

Who has inspired you most in your life?

My Dad, he's one of the hardest workers I know.

What advice would you give your 16-year-old self?

Work hard and try your best for your exams; they're important, but they're not the be-all and end-all either. There are other ways to get into university if that's where you want to go. Make sure you end up in a job you enjoy and it's never too late to figure out what you want to do.